

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-55 (canceled)

56. (currently amended) A surgical apparatus for excising a tissue mass comprising:

an elongated housing having a distal portion and a channel therein;

first and second support members advanceable from the channel to a second position to radially diverge with respect to each other and to diverge with respect to the target tissue mass to create a penumbra larger than a transverse dimension of the housing, a tip of the first and second support members extending extendable past the target tissue mass; and

a cutting loop subsequently expandable by the ~~diverging~~ diverged support members to a position wherein a diameter of the cutting loop exceeds a transverse dimension of the elongated housing, the cutting loop being electrically energized to cut tissue.

57. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 56, further comprising a membrane advanceable with respect to the elongated housing to remove the cut tissue.

58. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 57, further comprising a drawstring operatively associated with the membrane to close the membrane about the cut tissue.

59. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 56, wherein the support members are spring biased to diverge radially.

60. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 59, wherein the support members are advanced through an axial opening in the elongated housing.

61. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 60, further comprising a tissue piercing element extending from the housing for providing access to the tissue mass.

62. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim ~~61~~ 60, wherein the radially diverging support members create a conical penumbra.

63. (currently amended) A surgical apparatus for excising a target tissue mass comprising:

an elongated housing having a longitudinal axis;

at least ~~one support~~ three supports positioned within the elongated housing and movable from a first position collapsed within the housing to a second position extending from the housing where the at least ~~one support~~ three supports radially ~~diverges~~ diverge with respect to the longitudinal axis of the elongated housing and are configured to penetrate tissue, and

an electrocautery cutting wire ~~advanced~~ expanded by the at least ~~one support~~ three supports from a collapsed position to a second position outside the elongated housing, the electrocautery wire being advanced past the target tissue mass, and a tip of the at least ~~one support~~ three supports extending past the target tissue mass.

64. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 63, wherein the at least ~~one support~~ three supports radially ~~diverges~~ diverge when extended from the housing to define a region larger in area than the area of the target tissue mass.

65. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 64, further comprising a tissue piercing element to provide access to the target tissue mass.

66. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 63, further comprising a second electrocautery wire advanced by a second ~~support~~ member.

67. (currently amended) A surgical apparatus for excising a target tissue mass comprising an elongated housing, electrocautery cutting

means for cutting tissue, the cutting means advanceable from a collapsed position within the housing to an expanded position outside the housing and advanceable distal of the tissue mass to be removed, support means movable independently of the cutting means for enabling movement of the electrocautery cutting means from the collapsed position to the expanded position, the electrocautery cutting means defining a tissue cutting area having a dimension greater than a transverse dimension of the elongated housing.

68. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 67, further comprising means extending from the housing for creating access to the tissue mass.

69. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 67, wherein the apparatus defines a conical penumbra for removing a conical swath of tissue.

70. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 67, wherein the electrocautery cutting means forms a cutting loop having a diameter larger than a transverse dimension of the elongated housing and larger than the diameter of the tissue mass to be removed.

71. (currently amended) ~~The apparatus of claim 70,~~ A surgical apparatus for excising a target tissue mass comprising an elongated housing, electrocautery cutting means for cutting tissue, the cutting means advanceable from a collapsed position within the housing to an expanded position outside the housing and advanceable distal of the tissue mass to be removed, support means for enabling movement of the electrocautery cutting means from the collapsed position to the expanded position, the electrocautery cutting means defining a tissue cutting area having a dimension greater than a transverse dimension of the elongated housing, the electrocautery cutting means forming a cutting loop having a diameter larger than a transverse dimension of the elongated housing and larger than the diameter of the tissue mass to be removed, and wherein the cutting means are cinched together after advancement to the larger diameter.

72. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 67, wherein the support means are spring biased radially outwardly.

73. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 71, wherein the support means are spring biased radially outwardly.

74. (currently amended) A surgical apparatus for excising a target tissue mass comprising:

an elongated housing having a channel;

a plurality of elongated members positioned within the channel of the elongated housing and movable from a first collapsed position within the housing to a second expanded position outside the channel of the housing, the elongated members in the second position defining a tissue excision region having a diameter larger than a transverse dimension of the elongated housing, the elongated members having tissue penetrating tips; and

at least one electrocautery wire movable from a first position within the elongated housing to a second expanded position.

75. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 74, further comprising a tissue piercing member distal of the elongated housing to provide access to the target tissue mass.

76. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 74, wherein the elongated members radially diverge as they are advanced from the elongated housing.

77. (withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 76, further comprising a tissue piercing member distal of the elongated housing to provide access to the target tissue mass.

78. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 76, further comprising a tissue containment bag advanceable from the channel in the elongated housing to envelop the target tissue mass.

79. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 76, wherein the elongated members are spring biased to radially diverge.

80. (currently amended) ~~The apparatus of claim 74,~~ A surgical apparatus for excising a target tissue mass comprising:

an elongated housing having a channel;

a plurality of elongated members positioned within the channel of the elongated housing and movable from a first collapsed position within the housing to a second expanded position outside the channel of the housing, the elongated members in the second position defining a tissue excision region having a diameter larger than a transverse dimension of the elongated housing;

at least one electrocautery wire movable from a first position within the elongated housing to a second expanded position,
and

~~further comprising~~ an expandable sheath advanceable from the elongated housing to provide a radially inward force on the target tissue mass.

Claims 81-87 (canceled)